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SUBJECT: IRAN IN IRAQ: IRANIAN DEMARCHE ON IRAN'S GOOD INTENTIONS, IRANIAN AMBASSADOR REBUFFED ON DIRECT ACCESS TO NUMBER 10

REF: 6-28 EMBASSY LONDON -- NEA/IR AND EMBASSY

BAGHDAD E-MAIL

Classified By: Political Counselor Rick Mills for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (CO/NF) Summary: The Iranian Ambassador conveyed a pro-forma summary of its own benign intentions in Iraq during a June 22 demarche at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). The demarche was intended to provide an Iranian version of the May 28 U.S.-Iran talks in Baghdad, according to feedback from the FCO. The FCO interlocutor was Iraq Director Simon McDonald, the successor to Blair foreign policy advisor Nigel Sheinwald. The FCO notetaker for the meeting told poloff that, following the demarche, McDonald dismissed the Iranian points as another example of Iran's "usual, fatuous" claim of good intentions on Iraq. Iranian Ambassador Movahedian also awkwardly raised with McDonald the idea of the Ambassador serving as a principal conduit in any future direct Iranian exchanges with Number 10, in place of what FCO calls the "Sheinwald-Larijani channel." Movahedian also suggested the idea of direct Iranian engagement with the UK on the nuclear issue, with himself as interlocutor. McDonald politely but firmly dismissed Movahedian's suggestions. End Summary.

The Iranian Spin on Meetings with U.S.

¶2. (CO/NF) UK FCO Iran Team leader Will Gelling shared with London Poloff the substance of an Iranian MFA demarche delivered June 22 by Iranian ambassador Movahedian to FCO Iraq Director Simon McDonald, for which Gelling was the notetaker. Movahedian provided a written Iranian summary (ref) of the May 28 meeting in Baghdad between Ambassadors Crocker and Qomi, and made the following points:

-- the IRI is doing its best to help Maliki and others improve security, and he (Movahedian) hoped for a "new start" with HMG after Mr. Brown's accession as Prime Minister;

-- the IRI is ready to take any steps required to help in this regard;

-- and Iran's concerns in Iraq should be taken seriously.

¶3. (CO/NF) McDonald replied to Movahedian that there have already been numerous bilateral and multilateral contacts between the UK and Iran regarding Iraq. The UK objective is to leave the south of Iraq with a security situation in place which will not collapse without a UK presence, but attacks by "JAM gangsters" slow progress toward this objective. McDonald told the Iranian ambassador that HMG supports formal Iran-Iraq government to government links but not informal

ties such as grew up under Saddam Hussein and informal Iranian activity in the south other than dialogue should stop. Gelling said the FCO would make no reply to the IRI written summary of the Baghdad meetings. Gelling also offered the judgment, with which McDonald reportedly agrees, that Movahedian was fishing for some change in UK Iraq policy and was passing the "usual, fatuous" message on Iran's good faith in Iraq.

Iranian Ambassador Proposes Himself as A Communication Link

¶4. (CO/NF) Gelling said Movahedian also mentioned an interest, apparently a personal one, in engaging with the UK on issues beyond Iraq security, to include the nuclear file, a subject in which Movahedian has had no role to date. Gelling said Movahedian, although he did not explicitly mention the existing Sheinwald-Larijani channel, also spoke of serving as an Iranian channel between Number 10 and Ahmedinejad. Gelling commented that Movahedian had for some time been frustrated with not having Number 10 access. Gelling said Movahedian's June 22 comments were a clumsy (and unsuccessful) effort to insert himself into that channel and into the nuclear issue. McDonald did not respond to Movahedian other than to note without elaboration that any Number 10 access would be up to the new Prime Minister; McDonald did not offer to pass on Movahedian's suggestion. Gelling's judgment was that Movahedian's suggestion was a personal initiative, rather than part of an approach directed by Tehran.

¶5. (CO) Embassy Comment: Previous FCO comments to Poloff on Movahedian indicate he is not, unlike his predecessor, well respected by FCO or among UK Iranian expats - he is widely seen as having been appointed by Ahmedinejad strictly for his political reliability, not his competence. It is not

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surprising a Movahedian attempt to circumvent or halt the existing UK channel to Larijani, and to suggest direct engagement with the UK on the nuclear issue, would be inept and unsuccessful.

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